

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 AID-05 IO-13 /086 W

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R 151030Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5077

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

USLO PEKING

CINCPAC

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CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, EGEN, SN, UR

SUBJECT: RAJARATNAM RETURNS FROM SOVIET UNION

REF: SINGAPORE 1721

1. FOREIGN MINISTER RAJARATNAM RETURNED TO SINGAPORE ON APRIL 14 FROM WEEKLONG VISIT TO SOVIET UNION WHICH INCLUDED VISITS TO MOSCOW, KIEV AND RIGA. SINGAPORE PRESS GAVE SCANT COVERAGE TO DETAILS OF VISIT BETWEEN RAJARATNAM'S DEPARTURE AND HIS AIRPORT PRESS CONFERENCE UPON HIS RETURN.

2. REPORT OF PRESS CONFERENCE IN STRAITS TIMES OF APRIL 15 LEADS OFF WITH RAJA'S AFFIRMATION, IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION ON PRIME MINISTER LEE'S UPCOMING VISIT TO PRC, THAT SINGAPORE WOULD
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BE LAST OF ASEAN NATIONS TO ESTABLISH TIES WITH CHINA. HE IS

REPORTED TO HAVE REPLIED, "WE WILL STILL BE THE LAST. THAT IS WHAT CONSISTENCY IS ABOUT. WE KEEP OUR WORD." "SINGAPORE'S POLICY HAS ALWAYS BEEN A CONSISTENT ONE--COOPERATION WITH THE BIG POWERS AND NO INVOLVEMENT IN THEIR RIVALRY." HE NOTED THAT PM LEE HAS VISITED THE U.S. AND SOVIET UNION AND THAT HIS TRIP TO CHINA IS "TO SHOW THAT WE HAVE NO BIAS TOWARDS ANY PARTICULAR POWER."

3. AS REPORTED IN APRIL 15 STRAITS TIMES, AS WELL AS IN EARLIER REPORT ON APRIL 10 OF RAJA'S MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER GROMYKO, FOCUS OF RAJARATNAM'S DISCUSSIONS WITH SOVIET INTERLOCUTORS APPARENTLY WAS ASEAN. RAJA SAID THAT HE HAD ASSURED HIS SOVIET COUNTERPART THAT ASEAN MEMBERS DID NOT WANT THEIR ORGANIZATION TO BECOME AN ANTI-COMMUNIST MILITARY BLOC. HOWEVER, RAJA OBSERVED THAT WHILE SOVIET MISAPPREHENSIONS ABOUT ASEAN WERE UNFOUNDED, SOME PEOPLE'S (UNSPECIFIED) UTTERANCES COULD HAVE PROVIDED "LEGITIMATE GROUNDS" FOR THEIR CONCERN. MAIN OBJECT OF VISIT, RAJA REITERATED, WAS TO EXCHANGE VIEWS ON HOW USSR AND GOS SEE BILATERAL, REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ISSUES, AND TO IDENTIFY AREAS WHERE THERE WAS CONVERGENCE AND DIVERGENCE OF VIEWS. "ASEAN WAS ONE OF THE DIVERGENCES, BUT WHEN WE DISAGREE, WE NEED NOT BE HOSTILE."

4. RAJA RATHER POINTEDLY ALSO EXPRESSED DISAPPOINTMENT OVER RECENT CRITICISM OF ASEAN BY HANOI. ACKNOWLEDGING CLOSE MOSCOW-HANOI TIES, RAJA SAID HE DID NOT GO TO MOSCOW TO OBTAIN SOVIET ENDORSEMENT OF ASEAN. RAJA USED OPPORTUNITY TO CAUTION HANOI, AND INDIRECTLY MOSCOW, THAT GOS DOES NOT QUESTION RIGHT OF HANOI TO CRITICIZE ASEAN AS LONG AS SUCH CRITICISM CONFINED TO "AN INTELLECTUAL ASSESSMENT." BUT HE WARNED BLUNTLY AGAINST POSITIVE ACTION TO DESTROY ASEAN.

5. ACCORDING TO LOCAL PRESS REPORT, ONE OF RAJA'S LAST ACTIVITIES JUST PRIOR TO DEPARTURE, WAS MEETING WITH SENIOR ASEAN DIPLOMATS, ALL SAVE PHILIPPINES WHICH IS NOT REPRESENTED IN MOSCOW. SUBSTANCE OF MEETING, WHICH LASTED ONE HOUR, HAS NOT BEEN REPORTED BUT PRESUMABLY PROVIDED OPPORTUNITY FOR ROUTINE BRIEFING OF ASEAN PARTNERS.

6. RAJA ASSERTED THAT SOVIETS HAD TOLD HIM THEY ARE EAGER TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ENLARGE BILATERAL ECONOMIC TIES IN TRADE AND INDUSTRY. HE SAID THAT ONE OR TWO PROJECTS ARE LIKELY TO "TAKE OFF" AND THAT DISCUSSIONS WERE IN PROGRESS BETWEEN SOVIET OFFICIALS AND THOSE AT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD AND MINISTRY OF FINANCE. RAJA DECLINED TO PROVIDE DETAILS.
HOLDRIDGE

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